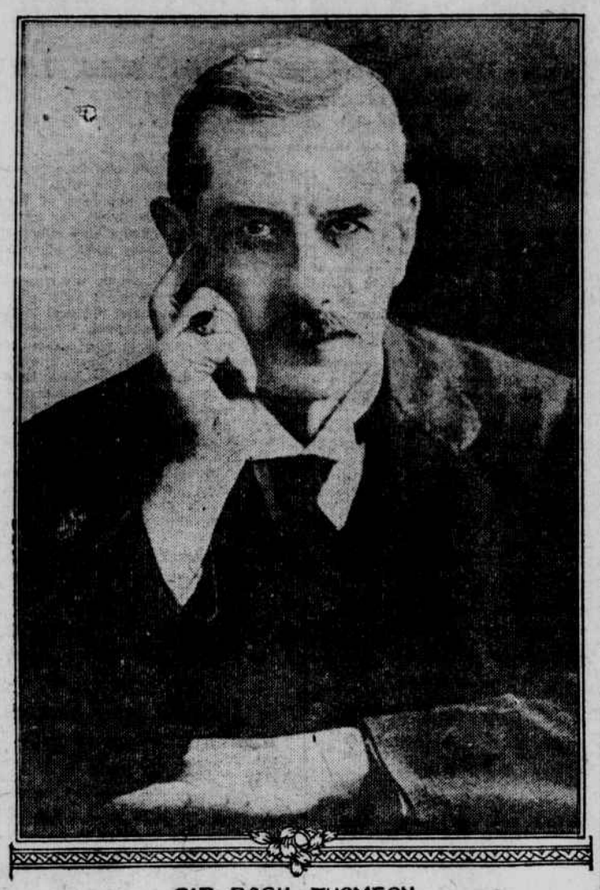
Sir Basil Thomson Describes Some Cases Which Scotland Yard Solved Without Help of Sherlock Holmes

By STEPHEN SENNETT.

FORMER HEAD OF SCOTLAND YARD



SIR BASIL THOMSON

IT is nice to think what Sherlock Holmes would have to say about Scotland Yard now. Here we have Sir Basil Thomson, K. C. B., trouping the United States prefacing his "My Experiences at Scotland Yard" with a few well chosen remarks about the utter impossibility of Sherlock. Sir Basil, formerly head of the Criminal Investigation Department at Scotland Yard, confesses that he is about fed up with the sort of fiction that makes the Scotland Yard inspector the "stupid foil of the brilliant detective."

Then Sir Basil goes on to tell the country that the Scotland Yard man is sometimes quite a neat and speedy worker, frequently getting somewhere from nowhere. In just a moment a few of Sir Basil's illustrations will be set forth. But as Sir Basil speaks we seem to hear the guffaw of Mr. Holmes—a guffaw, to be sure, tempered with regret that he should have to take advantage of a most regrettable affair to win a point over Sir Basil.

As Sir Basil lays the bull whip upon the bony shoulders of Mr. Holmes we receive word that Sir William Horwood, present head of Scotland Yard, is rendered temporarily inactive by poisoned chocolates. The chocolates—old ones, it seems, in a disreputable package—slip through all the doors between the outer gates of Scotland Yard and the private office of Sir William. That should be enough. Can't you hear Mr. Holmes speaking to the bewildered Inspector:

"Ah, yes, Inspector. YOU would think so. YOU would do it that way. YOU are from Scotland Yard. YOU would permit a package to pass unopened to your chief. As I have said, YOU are from Scotland Yard."

But it is much worse than just that. An employee of Scotland Yard, having tasted one of the poisoned and unsponsored chocolates, discovers that the sweet is bitter and not so easy to take as nice chocolates should be. Therefore (just listen to Mr. Holmes's raucous laughter) this trusted employee throws the nasty chocolates away! Think of it! Scotland Yard, with its own chief poisoned, throws away the evidence!

Well, let that pass. After all we know that what Scotland Yard has done it has done. We know, too, that what Mr. Holmes did he didn't do. Sir Conan Doyle made him do it. And also we know that Sir Basil is right in his opinion that almost any writer of detective fiction can take a celebrated case, select a solution therefor and then work backward to the beginnings of his mystery, handing the finished product right end to to the public for fireside consumption.

"I have never met Dr. Watson nor Sherlock Holmes," says Sir Basil. "If I might choose I'd sooner meet Watson because at least Watson was not a drug fiend and he showed real horse sense between flashes of brilliant stupidity. Poor fellow, like Sherlock Holmes, he was what his creator made him."

And then Sir Basil goes on to explain that we all have that advantage of origin, detective and reader of crime fiction. So consider, therefore, the numerous triumphs of Scotland Yard. Take, for example, the genius who made off with the clothes and all they contained of some hundreds of Londoners.

The Patient Is Left Flat; Robber Has Easy Time

One evening, said Sir Basil, a responsible looking man with a medicine case under his arm rang the bell of a resident of one of London's lower middle class neighborhoods.

"Good evening," said the stranger to the man of the house. "Does David Tubbs live here?"

"No."

"Pardon, I have the wrong house. The fog you know."

The stranger with the medicine case is about to leave the stoop. But suddenly he turns upon the man of the house and peers sharply into his face.

"Good Lord, man," he cried, "you, too? By George this is amounting to epidemic sure enough."

"What's eating you?" demands the man of the house.

"Thus far, nothing. But it is eating you, my friend. Rather pronounced case, too, I'll be bound."

"See here. What's all this you're saying?"

"Sciotarum Probensis."

"Off with you!" cries the man of the house, "I'll call the police."

"See here, my man," says the stranger, pushing into the hall, "you have a bad case of Sciotarum Probensis. I'm a doctor, you know, on my way to Mr. Tubbs's house to see him again. Lost my way in the fog, you know. But he's quite all right by this time. Got him in time, you know, and really only a mild case. Regular epidemic of it. Started twenty-four hours ago and seems to be sweeping London. Papers will be full of it in the morning, I dare say. If you'd like I'll give you a quick examination."

The more or less apprehensive victim backs into the parlor half convinced that he's not feeling extra. The strange doctor lifts his victim's eyelids.

"By Jove, you are lucky and no mistake. All signs of spinal complications. Maybe I can do lots this early in the disease. Take off your clothes."

The startled man of the house removes his vest, having vacated his coat after arriving home from work. There is a gold watch and chain in the vest. Also a wallet of suggestive embonpoint.

"Oh, no, my man!" cries the impatient doctor. "Off with all of the clothes like a good fellow. Come, come, we doctors are busy men in times like these."

Off come the clothes, right down to the heavy British skin. As they are shed the solicitous man of medicine catches them and lays them in a pile near the parlor door.

"Now down with you on the sofa there, old boy," he soothes. "Gently does it. Remember the least haste, the slightest excitement and off you go. Heart stops. Quick pain and poof it's all over with you. So gentle does it. Slowly down on the sofa."

The victim is prostrate. Also he is sick with fright. No mistake, he is feeling no end ill. Good thing the doctor chap happened along. Curious, too, that he never noticed how rotten he felt until the doctor saw him. Nothing short of providential, this doctor happening along.

"Well, old boy," says the doctor after a cursory view of the naked spine, "you've got it bad, but never say die. Stay where you are. I'm off to the chemist's at the corner. Don't move. Back in a jiffy with the Nux Methyl Codicil. One injection and I'll have you right as rain. Two and six for the Nux Methyl Codicil and you can pay me when I've injected it. But if you care to live don't move until I'm back."

"Right, doctor, and thank you, kindly," groans the victim of the dread Sciotarum Probensis, who has his face buried in a pillow.

The doctor departs. With him he takes his patient's clothes. Maybe the clothes will fetch five bob or so. Maybe a pound; who knows? And there is the watch and chain and a pound or so in money. Do it a couple of hundred times and you have something. Of course it takes nerve.

Bad Spelling Leads To Culprit's Arrest

Well, Scotland Yard landed that genius. By the grave deduction process of Sherlock Holmes? Not at all. Simply by getting the description of the man and referring back to the prosaic files. In the files they discovered a clothing thief who corresponded in appearance to the doctor. Name, W. Herring. Had a record for stealing clothes in Liverpool and Leeds. Here were William's Bertillon measurements and finger prints. Get William. They got him. He was identified. He went to prison. Mr. Holmes would have made a better story of it, but Scotland Yard did it quite as effectively—and more quickly.

And there was the respectable household in Kent that was all but divided against itself by anonymous letters addressed to various members of the family. Here in America the police would call them poison pen letters. First the circumspect lady of the manor received a most insulting letter. It put her to her bed in a nervous collapse. Then her husband received a few of them. The old gentleman was about done up, such were the contents of these notes.

The young ladies received their nasty letters and the sons of the family were recipients of more. The thing went on for six months. Local constables and private detectives surrendered the case, confessing themselves baffled. The letters didn't come by mail. Not a stamp was used. The butler got them. The second man received a few. Cook got hers and was so hurt that she couldn't cook for weeks. Nurse was made a target for the abusive epistles. Even the small scullery maid, as meek and inoffensive as Sally Brass's starved Marchioness, got two of them.

Every morning some member of the household, servants and masters and mistresses, found them in his or her pockets or in the front hall or on a window ledge or under his or her bedroom door or under his or her pillow. Whole squads of private detectives surrounded the house and watched all night and all day. Take heed of that, Mr. Holmes. Other squads of detectives stood about the halls and chambers of the house all night and all day. They saw nothing, heard nothing, discovered nothing. Now what do you think of that, Dr. Watson?

Just one clew was turned up. All the letters were typed on an ancient typewriter. The alignment of the type proclaimed the state of decrepitude of the machine. The lower case "e" was rather flattened out. Elementary! Elementary! Find the typewriter. Locate its owner. Elementary! Elementary!

But they didn't find the typewriter. They didn't find the typist. That is they didn't until Inspector Blodgett went out from Scotland Yard.

"See here, Blodgett," said Sir Basil. "Go out there and see what you can do. Don't hurry. Take your time. Of course don't take too much time, but do what you can."

Inspector Blodgett was gone just forty-eight hours.

"What's the matter, Blodgett?" demanded Sir Basil.

"Nothing at all, sir," explained Blodgett. "It was quite simple. We have her locked up and a confession, sir."

"Who?"

"The cook's girl. A half grown young woman. The scullery maid, so to speak."

"You see, sir," explained Blodgett, "I asked them the minute I got there to let me read the letters. Quite a stack of them there was. Forty or fifty I should say. I spent two hours reading them. I noticed in some of them words repeatedly misspelled —'w-i-c-h,' 'm-a-b-y,' 'c-e-l-l-e-r,' 'k-u-r-b,' 'l-o-v-e-i-n-g,' &c. Well, sir, I made up a list of those misspelled words and I called together all members of the family and all the servants. I had them all together and gave each a pencil and a block of paper.

"'Now,' said I, 'you will be kind enough to write down what I dictate.'

"Well, sir, I dictated something or other to them slowly, using all the misspelled words. Then I collected the papers, looked them all over and went to the scullery maid and said:

"'See here, young woman, where's that typewriter?'

"Blest if she didn't brazen it out until I showed her her misspelled words in the dictation and the same misspelling in the letters. And then she took me off to where she had the typewriter hidden. They'd never heard her using it, because she never used it near the house."

So how about that, Mr. Holmes?

The Broken Button Mystery; Or, Who Killed Costermonger

Sir Basil tells of one of the many missing and broken button mysteries. What city hasn't had its murder where the only clew was a button or a piece of button found near the scene of the crime? But here was a London costermonger murdered of a Saturday night in Limehouse. His skull was bashed in. Whoever did it took the man's overcoat, too. Twenty feet away from the body the police found a piece of a fairly large and altogether common bone button.

The button might have had nothing at all to do with the murder. To repeat, it was, after all, only a sliver of a button. This murder happened in the winter. Scotland Yard men searched the public houses in the district and suspected this man and that. But there was no arrest that winter. They did not find the missing overcoat either, although all the hundreds of pawnbrokers were interviewed and old clothes men examined.

But along about overcoat time of the following winter one of the inspectors asked Sir Basil to let him have just one more go at it. They had saved the foolish little sliver of bone button. The inspector took it and fared forth to Limehouse. From pub to pub he went, simulating drunkenness. He'd paw men and fall against men. He would become embroiled in arguments and fights. He was having a pretty rough time of it. Presently he came to a particularly mean pub where the murdered man had been wont to do his drinking.

The inspector lurched among the assembled costermongers and suddenly he came to a man with an overcoat that sported a button that was not quite whole. He picked a fight with the wearer of that overcoat and promptly knocked him stiff, as we Americans are wont to say. The roughnecks present applauded the victory of a drunken man over a sober heavyweight but paused, somewhat startled, when the former shed his pretense of intoxication and coolly fitted a sliver of bone button to the incomplete button on the dazed coster's overcoat.

That is all. The wearer of the overcoat was hanged for the murder. He confessed before Jack Ketch ended him. A bit of brain work, that. And the brain came from Scotland Yard.

Sir Basil sets forth the most valuable assets of the detective department and the individual detective as organization, hard work, luck and knowledge of human nature. Naturally he includes the necessity of brains, but takes it for granted that the possessor of knowledge of human nature must have a certain amount of serviceable brains.

Consider the Scotland Yard man who was sent out to apprehend a thief who had stolen a gentleman's watch. Now, the stealing of a watch is a common enough affair. Watches are stolen in London as rapidly as they are in New York. If a detective was put on every case of stolen watch there would not be enough detectives to cover that sort of knavery alone, much less pay attention to murders, assaults and so on.

However, this was an extraordinary watch belonging to an extraordinary gentleman. Scotland Yard wanted that watch back. So out of Scotland Yard went a young detective who knew his London and his Londoner. From a nark (we call them stool pigeons) he learned that it was possible that one Jem Cooper was a man not above lifting a toff's watch, and the nark took the detective to a pub where Jem was entertaining friends at beer. To tackle Jem at the time would have been as dangerous as it might have been fruitless. There was no direct evidence that Jem had the watch.

But the Scotland Yard man followed Jem and came to a district where several pawnshops were located. A bit of skillful maneuvering and the detective was ahead of instead of behind Jem. He took a chance. He stopped in front of a pawnbroker's window, and out of the corner of his eye he observed Jem regarding that very shop. He hustled up an alley and into the rear of the shop. He showed his badge to the proprietor of the shop and the proprietor obeyed instructions to crouch below the counter.

In came Jem.

"How much will you give me for that beauty?" inquired Jem.

The place was gloomy. The detective had thrown his hat on the floor and was leaning over the counter. He took the watch, examined it critically, convinced himself that it was the one he was seeking.

"Ten years, Jem," he replied, grabbing his man.

And he kept his word. Jem got ten.

Of course, as has been said herein before, Sherlock Holmes couldn't possibly have done the thing so simply. Had he not made it intricate and had a fearful time with Dr. Watson and the poor Inspector, incidentally (not to mention playing a sonata on his violin and shooting a few grains of morphine into his forearm), nobody in the world would have paid $2 a volume for him or whatever it was he cost his ultimate consumer.

And, of course, he would never have solved the famous Werther murder by merely going from laundry to laundry until he came to one where the mark on the shirt in which the torso of the murdered woman was wrapped was identified as the sign of the linen of Werther, the Soho butcher. A ghastly affair, but simple. The police found the torso and legs of a woman wrapped in, among other things, a man's shirt. Almost obliterated was the laundry mark on that shirt.

A detective went from laundry to laundry with that shirt. And eventually, after visiting a thousand and one laundries, he came to the one where Werther had his linen cleaned. They found the head and arms of the unhappy woman in Werther's shop. A sordid story. But can you imagine Sherlock Holmes and the faithful Watson trailing from laundry to laundry? And would you have paid $2 for the book that recounted his pilgrimage? Yes, Mr. Werther was hanged.

A GLIMPSE OF GERMANY BENEATH A GAY SURFACE

By THOMAS H. DICKINSON.

IN considering the facts involved in the return of Germany to a normal standard of health and productiveness I prefer for the moment to ignore such technical matters as reparations, the exchange value of marks and the amount paid in taxes by the German industrials and labor. Peculiarly enough, I consider these to be imponderable factors; they may influence the governing factors, but they are too much dependent upon chance events both inside and outside of Germany to support profitable speculation.

Instead of these things I wish to refer to certain matters which lie more near to the life of the people; to draw from these conditions, which are of course but straws to show the way of the wind, some hint of the manner in which German stamina is reacting against the present desperate conditions. At the present time no conclusions can be drawn as to the effect of the exchange rate of German marks upon the life of the German people for the reason that exchange has passed into the realms of the absurd.

Manifestly one cannot say that cost of living has risen in any degree commensurately with the rise in the exchange rates. Such an increase would long ago have wiped out the German people. Even bread, which is state supported, costs to-day a hundred times as much as it did in peacetime; butter costs one hundred and fifty times as much; potatoes two hundred times as much, expressed in terms of German money. How much more do they cost in terms of the people's labor, the people's economy, the people's starvation? These are the only true indexes by which to study increased cost. Money has become an absurdity.

When the statistical bureau of the League of Nations reports that on a scale of 100, representing prewar values, the cost of living stands in Belgium 367, Paris 291, Rome 415, Great Britain 181 and the United States 167, we can understand what is meant. Common sense tells us the figures are not far wrong. When the same bureau tells us that cost of living in Poland has multiplied five hundred and eighty times, in Austria a thousand times and in Germany a hundred times, common sense tells us that whatever may be the dignity of the figures upon which these conclusions are based the conclusions themselves are nonsense. Money is a standard of value in the same way that a steel yardstick is a standard of length. It is based upon gold for the same reason that the linear measure is based upon tempered metal. But if for any reason all the yardsticks in a certain area were suddenly made one-tenth of their accustomed length, the height of men in that area would not thereby be increased. While they might be called sixty feet high, they would still be the same size as before.

German People Living, but Without Plan for Future

It is very far from my purpose to imply that conditions are not desperately bad in the countries named above. It is my purpose to show that these desperate conditions cannot be represented by the altitude of the exchange rate, and that in seeking so to visualize conditions we are failing to grasp some of the essential features of the problem. It is not so much the rise in the cost of living that is the important thing. The German people are living to-day a little more meagerly, it is true, but still they are living. The important thing is the disorganization in German life, the isolation in German economy, the confusion in the psychology of the German people, the lack of an orderly environment in which to plan for a future of orderly development and reconstruction.

Before the war the German people were among the most thrifty people in Europe. To-day all incentive, even all excuse for thrift, has disappeared. No one will put his money into savings banks when the depreciation of a month will cut his deposits to one-quarter of their former value. When one has money—and manifestly money is to be had in wagon loads—the German has two, and only two, impulses. The one is the purchase of commodities, foodstuffs, first of all, or merchandise that may be later salable; the other is gambling in the Boerse. The German was never a very wild speculator. Paradoxically enough he has gone into speculation in commercial emissions during the last two years largely as a matter of thrift and conservatism. Money which has lost all contact with reality is quickly exchanged for commercial paper which is based upon a certain belief in German industry, genius and thrift.

Prices have gone up by leaps and bounds. Following them wages have gone up. The necessity of continually adjusting wages to costs of living has kept German industry always on the anxious seat, has made it impossible to plan a month ahead on income and outgo, has introduced an entirely new system of contract into German affairs. Even the German State in passing a maternal benefit act makes the compensation purposely extensible, for fear that the payments provided in the bill for milk allowance for a month would not be sufficient to buy a postcard.

Taxes Are Multiplied To Save Computation

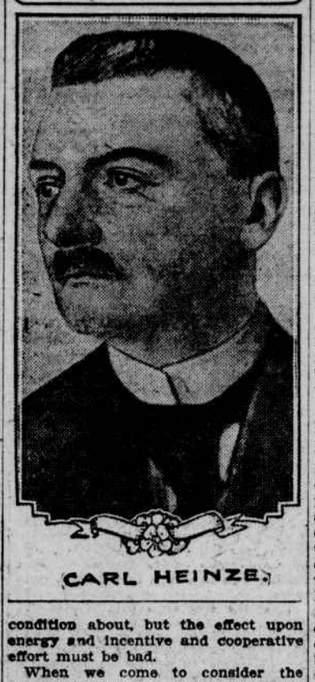
As the State issues more money costs rise; as costs rise wages rise. This makes it necessary for the Government to increase taxes. A convenient system has been introduced into the Reichstag of retaining the phraseology of the old taxation act and amending only the figure of the tax. Thus the sugar tax is increased seven times; the brandy monopoly bill calls for an augmentation of five times; the tax on lighting materials is increased four times; the beer tax four times; the mineral water tax two times.

But one is not to suppose that by these successive readjustments the entire structure is raised together. Each reorganization becomes the expedient of drawing the belt of national standards a little tighter. Unfortunately the making of money does not mean the making of commodities of use; unfortunately, too, every million of marks that is printed raises by so much higher the barrier against foreign articles coming in. Germany must depend upon what she has and what she can produce. Therefore the people must use less. In spite of apparent profligacy of expenditure the German people are learning to do this. Signs not so high as a church nor so wide as a barn door, but still large enough, show Germany to be pinched. To-morrow she may be in extremity.

Notice I am not speaking of the power of Germany to pay reparations. I am speaking of the effect of present events upon the lives of the people, their power to come back, their faculties of recuperation, the mental, moral and physical factors which determine whether Germany is to be again well and strong. Vital statistics since the revolution are necessarily slight and incomplete, but such as exist make very intgresting reading. Particularly significant are those which throw light on the equalization of the standards of living, the toning down of living standards in response to reduced resources and a more economical system of social organization.

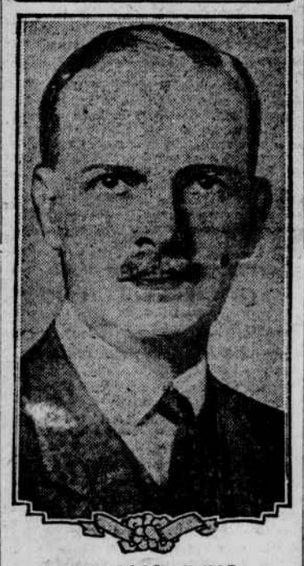
Outside of the speculators and profit-takers only two classes exist in Germany to-day. On the one side are the minor and higher officials of private and industrial firms whose earnings are practically the same. On the other side are the skilled and unskilled workers, whose wages likewise have been equalized. No one can question the necessity that has brought this condition about, but the effect upon energy and incentive and cooperative effort must be bad.

Minister of Justice



CARL HEINZE.

German Chancellor



WILLIAM CUNO.

When we come to consider the standards of living in dwelling houses and apartments we find the same leveling movement going on. Facts on this come from the tables of demands for lodgings and dwellings which come into the Housing Bureau, as well as from the tables of new buildings. Out of 2,000,000 applications which came into this bureau in Prussia for lodging and dwelling accommodation for the year covering the last half of 1920 and the first half of 1921 85 per cent. were for three rooms or fewer; half were for two rooms. In the larger cities there is a remarkable decline in the demands for larger lodgings and an increase in the demand for smaller ones. For one offering of one and two room apartments there were demands from twenty applicants. The tendency from the larger to the smaller apartments is marked in the applications of the succeeding quarters of 1920 and 1921.

This demand for smaller lodgings is reflected in building statistics. The number of apartment buildings and tenements built in thirty-five large cities increased four times in 1921 over 1920; three times in the early months of 1922. The number of dwellings erected increased only one-half. Not only in the large cities but in the smaller ones as well the tendency is away from the large apartment and private dwelling to the smaller units. Along with this there is a tendency to give up servants.

The question of Germany's replenishment offers interesting scope for speculation, and here, too, the most recent figures contain some striking features. By her own figures Germany lost 1,824,051 dead and 4,247,000 wounded and missing. After the war marriage rose to a high figure. The year 1920 saw the highest recorded marriage rate throughout Germany; the year 1921 brought back the figure nearer to the pre-war rate. Marriages per thousand population in 1913 had stood 7.7; in 1920 they had almost doubled to 14.6; in 1921 marriages stood at 11.9 per thousand of the population.

Birth Rate for Last Two Years Not Equal to That in 1913

How, then, about births? Strange to say, the births neither in 1920 nor 1921 have equaled the births per thousand in 1913. In this earlier year births had stood 28.5 per thousand; in 1920 this number was reduced 10 per cent; in 1921 the reduction was 15 per cent. Though they are marrying the young couples of Germany have not yet begun to give children to the fatherland at a rate commensurate with the marriage rate.

When we come to consider the status of the children we obtain the most impressive index of the situation in Germany. Statistics are plentiful showing the undernourishment of children in German cities, comparing the height and weight of children born during and after the war with the standard of German children born before the war. These figures find frequent reproduction in America, and I prefer not to repeat them here. One usually notices that these statistical tables are accompanied by comment pointing to the blockade as the cause of Germany's ills. Four years after the close of hostilities one can still find in statistics given out for foreign consumption these undisguised attempts at propaganda.

As a matter of fact the condition of Germany's three-year-old children and less cannot be connected with the blockade. And undernourishment among children is by no means limited to Germany. Undernourishment is found as well among American and English children. One does not need to confine himself to physical condition of the children to decide that the situation of the next generation in Germany is such as to give cause for some disquiet.

That same disorganization of the mental environment which has done much to still the energy of German incentives, to introduce a factor of fakery and shoddy into German manufacturing, is having its influence on the lives and minds of children. From these homes which as a result of the war have suffered deterioration of standards there has been an exodus of boys and girls, leaving in the midst of school days, to seep economic inde-

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A Woman Whose Job Is Spending $30,000 A Day for Clothes

By A BUYER.

"MERE child's play!" everybody exclaims. "What could be easier? I don't have to be taught to spend money. It comes natural!"

That is just where everybody is wrong. Spending $30,000 a day is one of the most difficult and arduous tasks. I have done it, so I know. My business is spending money.

It would not be so difficult if I were limited in the amount of money that I could spend. But I am not. As the European buyer of a large New York department store unlimited amounts are at my disposal. I can spend as much money as I want and on whatever I see fit. "Whatever I see fit" is the crucial point. I must know what is fit and it is that knowledge which is so difficult to acquire and so precious and well recompensed once it is acquired.

To spend prodigious and lavish amounts I go to Europe twice a year, sometimes by myself and sometimes with others. I am in Paris only two or three weeks, but during that time I work under terrific pressure. But my work is of a very curious nature. To most people, especially women, it would be a delight and hilarious play.

As they say in slangy circles, "I'm on the town." I visit the smart cafes, hotels and dancing places. I go to the races and the tennis tournaments. I go to Deauville, Monte Carlo and the other famous resorts and watering places. I go, in fact, wherever there are well dressed women—women of every station of society. And all the time that I am laughing and dancing and enjoying myself I am watching with eager, avid eyes to see what the French women are wearing.

Of course I am not alone in my orgy of observation, as all buyers are equally vigilant. I know a New York buyer who devotes two days a week to visiting the smart hotels and restaurants and the dancing club of the hour, even going to the big football games.

Besides looking at clothes I buy them. In one day I spent $30,000 at the big dressmakers'. The big dressmaking houses of Paris are very much like ours in New York. Or rather, ours are like those in Paris, because we have copied them. In Paris they are not run with our terrific efficiency; they never quite know where they are at, rather hectic, haphazard and a trifle untidy. The salespeople are very polite to us, of course; they want our money. But then, too, they are naturally polite and they make excellent salespeople. It must be because they have the true "sympathie" and what the French call the intelligence of the heart.

Buyer Has to Think and Think; That Makes the Job Hard

But we never go to these dressmakers until we know what the French women are wearing and what we want to buy. Otherwise they would have us at their mercy and sell us any old thing they wanted and we would be none the wiser. A terrible situation and not to be imagined.

While these activities that I have outlined may not seem difficult, but rather the quintessence of all the joys and good things of this earth, they are really very hard work, because so much depends on the accuracy of my observation and the intelligence of my purchases. I have to think, and thinking is always exhausting to us poor humans. For on those few weeks I spend in Paris depends the policy of the American buyers of our store for the next six months. What I buy in Europe is to be the inspiration of the American manufacturer. Paris clothes are the vision of the future. So they may be said to be the cream of the business, while American clothes are the bread and butter. But Paris clothes are the eventual bread and butter because American clothes are dependent on them. This is why it is so important what I do when I am in Paris. This is why I work and play so hard; so much depends on it.

While it may sound contradictory, it is, nevertheless, true that I do not necessarily bring back what is very popular in Paris. For instance, there is at present in this country a tremendous vogue for beaded dresses. French women never wore them very much; they were never very popular in Paris. But the reason why they are so much worn here is that, for one thing, American women like beads, and for another, they can be imported and retailed for something like $35, putting French dresses within the reach of a great many American women. So we bring them over and sell great quantities of them.

Besides dresses such as these that we know will sell, we import dresses that will be a constant reminder to us of what Americans will be wearing in six months or two years time, things that will be adaptable to the American woman's figure. For it is true that French clothes have to be adapted to us. Paris fashions have to be made wearable; Paris silhouettes have to be modified.

But this adaptation is much less radical to-day than it was ten years ago; much less modification is necessary. What does it mean? Only that American women are better dressed, if we take Paris as our goal. Only that we are getting nearer and nearer to Paris. Just another proof of that very trite statement—that the world is getting very, very small.

Our Styles From Six Months To Two Years Behind French

This adaptation of Paris fashions is entirely dependent for its degree upon time. Time is a tremendous factor. So much depends upon timeliness in presenting clothes for sale. It is very important not to show Paris clothes—or copies of Paris clothes—until the American public is ready for them. Yet if we are too late in presenting them, they are, of course, a total loss.

So Paul Poiret was right when he said that we are slow. We are. We are anywhere from six months to two years behind the French. But we get there eventually, so we must like their styles. The business of a buyer is not so much in knowing what the public wants as when it will want it. And, what is more, he must know it a long time before the public does, so that it can have it when it wants it.

These are only a few of the things that a girl must know and understand before she can be a buyer of women's clothes and be privileged to spend $30,000 in one day.

I have been asked what are the most important qualifications for a buyer. The answer is ears to hear with and eyes to see with. She must have an open mind to take in the things she hears and the sights she sees. No matter how old in years she may be, she must have a young outlook and be able to step about. She must be able to look at things and visualize their possibilities. In other words, she must have imagination.

Because the amount of money she may spend is unlimited, she carries a tremendous responsibility. She is aided and abetted and advised by a "merchandise man" who is usually himself an ex-buyer.

People don't get such a position of responsibility by simply applying for the job. Buyers are not made that way. And, what is more, there is no school where they can learn the "psychology and whole art of buying," and then step into an important position.

School of Hard Knocks Teaches the Buying Art

Many women buyers have reached their goal by being thrown on the world at the age of 14—to sink or swim. Those with ability and dogged determination, who put in long, hard years of work, have arrived. They have had to fight their way up, step by step, elbowing their way through the terrific competitive crowd.

And promotion is really the proper way to get capable and responsible persons in any business. That is what we do in our store. Thank goodness we have no efficiency experts nor any of their kin! As an example, take the window dressers. They have been to no school of interior decoration; they have studied under no professor the essentials of line, color and form. Yet they know and have learned their business through work and experience.

I was born lucky, for I have not been through all this maelstrom. I avoided it by having the good fortune to be born into the right background. My father was a merchant and he sent me to college, and college gives a certain vision and breadth of view that I do not think I could have acquired in any other way. In my opinion background is just as important as years of experience. I agree entirely with the Catholic Church when it says: "Give me a child of 7 years of age and I will vouch for it for the rest of its life."

When I left college the only possible thing for me to do seemed to be to go into the mercantile business. I hated mechanical things like stenography and nothing else ever occurred to me. I started at $25 a week and in a short time, at a different establishment, my salary was doubled. At one time I was in business for myself. Now I am the chief foreign buyer for a big department store—an important job, "though I says it myself as didn't ought."

I can't sell anything. But, fortunately for me, it is not necessary to be able to sell things in order to be a buyer. The two activities require entirely different qualifications. I think that the reason why I cannot sell is that I cannot persuade anyone to buy a thing when I know it would be foolish and unprofitable for him.

My business is ideal for women. For one thing we are always well treated, naturally, since people want us to buy things from them. In that respect we really have the world by the tail—and that is always pleasant. For another—women are naturally interested in women's clothes—although I confess that I was not particularly interested in women's clothes when I started out. Then, too, buying requires a certain intuition—hunches. And women are famed for their sixth sense.

But most important of all, fashions are inconstant, and women, they say, are the very embodiment of inconstancy. It is very nice not to have the same fashions over and over again. That would be dreadfully dull.

If a girl is interested in art and trade, women's fashions should be her field of endeavor. For in the manufacture and design of women's clothes lies the art of the commercial world.

Freeing Italy's Press.

As the result of a vigorous protest by the National Press Federation against the suppression of non-Fascisti papers and the destruction of newspaper plants throughout Italy during the recent government crisis, Premier Mussolini has given his assurances that the liberty of the press will be respected by his Government, and that this liberty shall be limited only by the provisions of common law already existing.

The expression of the Premier has given general satisfaction, since the campaign against non-Fascisti papers, whether Socialist, Catholic, or Liberal, has been severe. While many plants seized by the Fascisti during the crisis have now been returned to their owners, a considerable number remained in Fascisti hands a week after the coup d'etat. The *Paese*, a Socialist morning paper published in Rome, has not yet been reestablished.

The gravest damage was suffered by the Milan plant and library of *Avanti*, the most important Socialist paper of the country, of which Premier Mussolini was editor until 1914. The plant, which is valued at 5,000,000 lire, has been almost completely wrecked. The plant is not covered by insurance, since after the Fascisti invasion in August no company would underwrite it.

During its two years' growth the Fascisti movement has attempted to suppress or wreck many newspapers, but during the week of the recent crisis the campaign became much more violent. Beginning the day after the Naples demonstration with the wrecking of the Naples office of the Rome Nittist paper, *Il Mondo*, the Fascisti continued their work until during the week of the crisis itself, practically no papers except those favorable to the Fascisti movement appeared.